



**Committee
Services Organizational Meeting
and the Northampton City Council** *on City*

Committee Members:

Chair: Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge

Vice-Chair: Councilor Karen Foster

Councilor Rachel Maiore

Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.

Meeting Minutes

Date: March 2, 2020, 4 p.m.

Location: City Council Chambers
212 Main St., Northampton, Massachusetts

Present: Councilor Karen Foster, Vice Chair
Councilor Rachel Maiore
Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.

Absent: Councilor Marianne L. LaBarge

1. **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

At 4:04 p.m., Acting Chair Councilor Foster called the meeting to order. On a roll call, Councilors Foster, Maiore and Quinlan were present. Councilor Marianne LaBarge was excused. Also present were Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler, Mayor David Narkewicz and Assistant Fire Chief Jon Davine.

Councilor Foster announced that the meeting was being audio and video recorded.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Eleanor Wakin of Ward 2 said she was there because she subscribes to a number of CDC newsletters and is pretty conscientious. She has a chronic blood cancer and is on chemotherapy and considered to have a compromised immune system, so she is very careful about her own health. She has been hearing so much confusion from neighbors about what might happen here if they have a case of infection that she has collected some of the questions neighbors have been funneling to her. She asked the following questions:

- ❖ In what ways are various local health care entities cooperating to address the Coronavirus (the hospital, VA, health department, Smith College, etc.)
- ❖ How easy is it to get tested if a provider sees a patient and feels they should be tested?
- ❖ What will Smith College do in the event there is an infected member of the college community? (A lot of people in Ward 2 go to events at Smith College. She asked if Smith College or the city will close events.)
- ❖ What would be the city's policy on infected people in general?

- ❖ Where would infected residents be quarantined and treated?
- ❖ Will quarantined patients who are forced to be hospitalized be billed for observation which is not covered by Medicare or billed as admitted patients, which is covered? (If someone is admitted to the hospital for observation and then referred to rehabilitation, the rehabilitation is not covered if the hospital stay is not covered, she asserted.)
- ❖ A lot of neighbors are starting to stockpile. What is the health department recommending in terms of stockpiling?
- ❖ It is very good for people to get information and very good to calm people's nerves for their questions to be heard, she observed. In what ways is the city planning to have meetings at which residents can be heard, ask their questions and get accurate information?

3. UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS

Presentation by Health Director Merridith O'Leary.

Ms. O'Leary introduced herself as the public health director for the City of Northampton. She said she didn't put together a specific presentation but is prepared to answer questions. The biggest question she is hearing is 'What is the city doing; i.e. - what is the city planning?'

She assured councilors preparations are being made. She is on a call with either the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) or the Center for Disease Control (CDC) almost daily. As of today, there is one confirmed case in Massachusetts and 43 confirmed cases and two reported deaths in the United States. Four of the cases are said to have involved person-to-person transmission indicating community transmission *might* be taking place. It is a rapidly evolving disease and guidance is changing day by day. The health department and emergency management team are communicating closely.

Mayor Narkewicz introduced Jon Davine, the city's emergency manager, who joined Director O'Leary at the table.

She and Assistant Chief Davine have been communicating since mid-January on a weekly basis, O'Leary reported. They immediately reached out to each other upon hearing about the virus. They have been coordinating their efforts with the city's Emergency Management team, including Smith College, the public schools and the Cooley Dickinson Hospital (CDH), etc., to cooperate in maintaining uniform messaging.

She will have a question and answer coffee hour at the senior center on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at 10 a.m. accompanied by Jennifer Meyer, the public health nurse, she announced.

Health department officials are having a preliminary planning meeting this week with representatives from CDH, Northampton Fire Rescue, the public schools and Smith College in case the situation escalates.

As part of its disease surveillance program, the health department has had to monitor three residents who came in from China for 14 days, she shared.

For 17 years, the city has been part of a regional preparedness coalition (Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition) and has been preparing for such an event by holding drills. The coalition's preparedness exercises are primarily about setting up emergency dispensing sites.

The city is going to be putting information on the website including a situational awareness report which will talk about what they are seeing globally and here in Northampton, she advised. She passed out an example.

The health department does have the authority to issue quarantines and evacuations, she confirmed.

City officials will be putting out a call for volunteers to join the Medical Reserve Corps, a volunteer group consisting of both medical and non-medical professionals vetted and trained to respond to medical emergencies, O'Leary continued. They really want to ramp up this group in case the situation does escalate.

Other activities include talking to nursing homes about preventative measures such as putting hand sanitizers at the entry way and not allowing visitors if they're sick and updating Continuation of Operation Plans (COOP) for city departments such as health, fire, police, planning, building and finance. (Assistant Chief Davine said he sent out updated COOP's this morning.)

The #1 priority is making sure they have accurate, timely messaging going out and making sure there is one repository with current, accurate information, she stressed.

Assistant Chief Davine referred to a conference call this afternoon. A lot of first responders want information on who's being quarantined in their community. Fire officials don't necessarily want to put that information out there out of regard for HIPAA regulations. The Fire Rescue Department did transport the three folks who were quarantined, so their folks do know where they are.

There is a lot of behind-the-scenes planning that is happening, he confirmed.

Mayor Narkewicz said he will be putting out a code red call. .

She is hearing a lot of people talking and a lot of conjecture in every facet of her life, down to whether it is safe to share yoga mats at the gym, Councilor Foster shared. She thinks having a current page on the website to direct people to is a great idea. She also applauded the plan for a coffee hour Q&A. She knows the health director's capacity is being stretched but if it is possible to do more of those, it would be great.

In response to a question from O'Leary about the kind of presentation that would be helpful, Councilor Foster said she thought a base report with a quick overview such as presented with an opportunity for residents to ask questions would be appreciated. Ms. O'Leary asked if this was something councilors could help set up within their wards, and they readily agreed.

Discussion continued, with Councilor Quinlan suggesting the idea of taping a question and answer session for broadcast on Northampton Open Media and Mrs. Wakin suggesting trying to bring Northampton Neighbors on board in the planning process. The group has 700 members

and has set up neighborhood circles. She gave Leigh Bailey as a contact for the group. Mayor Narkewicz said Senior Services Director Marie Westburg also works with them.

Councilor Foster asked where people are quarantined, and Assistant Chief Davine said they are being quarantined at home. Two Smith College students and two people who were asymptomatic but were quarantined due to travel were confined to their homes.

Councilor Maiore asked how long the quarantine is, and Ms. O'Leary said 14 days.

She had a call with the MADPH today, Ms. O'Leary said. The FDA just approved a series of tests MADPH has, but it will only provide a test if someone is symptomatic and has traveled to an affected area.

Councilor Foster asked about the recommendation for stockpiling.

As part of emergency preparedness, they always recommend people having seven days of supplies, Ms. O'Leary responded. Since they are saying now that quarantining is for 14 days, people might want to increase that to 14 days.

In response to a question, she confirmed the schools are working behind the scenes to prepare for an outbreak. "The last thing we want to do is close the schools down" since it causes so much disruption to people's lives, she observed.

Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra arrived at 4:35 p.m.

The CDC has a great link for businesses, Director O'Leary related. The message she's been getting out to businesses is to think about their sick policy. A lot of businesses have a policy that if an employee can't find a replacement they have to come in to work.

In almost all the CDC information that comes to her, proper hand-washing is emphasized over and over, Mrs. Wakin said. She wondered if there was a way the city could put out public service announcements to make the subject somewhat entertaining.

Proper handwashing takes about 20 seconds, Ms. O'Leary confirmed. Public health officials teach kids to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice. Proper handwashing and social distancing are two effective preventative measures.

Councilor Maiore said she would love to have some information to spread, and Mayor Narkewicz said his administration would be putting that out Wednesday.

Director O'Leary told councilors to let her know if they want to put together a coffee hour in their ward.

4. **20.023 APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF JON DAVINE AS FIRE CHIEF**

Mayor Narkewicz introduced Assistant Chief Jon Davine as his recommended appointment for the position of Chief of Northampton Fire Rescue. He summarized Assistant Chief Davine's background with the department, beginning as a firefighter in 1998 and rising through the ranks

as captain and Deputy Chief before being promoted to the rank of assistant chief in 2015. He reviewed his professional credentials, including a significant educational background in fire protection and safety technology and experience as both training coordinator and emergency manager for the city.

He first got to know Assistant Chief Davine during a power outage when he first became Mayor in 2001. He has the confidence of the men and women who work in the department. He thanked the City Services Committee for its consideration and expressed hope members would positively recommend his appointment.

Assistant Chief Davine said he is honored that the Mayor has confidence in him to run the department. He remembered thinking the office job was boring when he first started in 1998. Having been in there now for five years as assistant chief, he can't believe how busy it is. They have a great group of people. He has worked hand-in-hand with Chief Nichols for the last five years and feels confident in his ability to run the department. He is excited.

Councilor Quinlan noted the city faces a tough question tomorrow with the override. If it fails, he asked if Davine had an idea of what the department would look like.

They have run a bunch of different scenarios of what things would look like, Assistant Chief Davine confirmed. Unfortunately, there would be some loss of service. They have different options for cutbacks.

Councilor Quinlan asked what he thinks is most likely.

The good thing is they're now short, Assistant Chief Davine said. They have six vacancies and after upcoming retirements they will have nine, so if they have to cut positions they wouldn't have to lay anybody off; they would simply not fill positions.

Mayor Narkewicz suggested Assistant Chief Davine describe the department.

The department has four shifts – A Group, B Group, C Group and D Group. Firefighters work 24-hour shifts with 24 hours on, 24 hours off, 24 hours on and then a five-day break. They work 48 hours, they just do it in two days. There is a 13-man shift minimum. If staffing drops below 13, they hire on overtime to get it back up to 13. Each shift staffs three Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances (two downtown and one in Florence), two fire engines and a command vehicle and has two captains and a Deputy Chief.

Last year, call volume was almost 8,000 calls. Last month, they did 572 calls so they average almost 20 calls every 24 hours.

When he started in 1998 they did almost 2,500 calls. Consistently about 71-72% of calls are ambulance-related.

A couple of years back they certified the fire engines to the paramedic level since most of the captains are paramedics. The engine companies can't transport patients but they can start care and administer medication.

The ambulance service brings in a little over \$2 million annually and has a very good collection rate. Northampton Fire Rescue is one of the leaders in EMS and Fire in the county. Last month crews went out of town 29 times and only brought in mutual aid three times. Consistently, about 52% of the time they have multiple calls going on.

Shifts spend half the day training and the other half doing inspections, namely smoke detector, propane tank and new oil burner inspections. Engine companies do one and two-family inspections while Deputy Chiefs do three-family and above and underground tank removals and a fire prevention officer handles remaining inspections.

A full-time training officer works Monday through Friday. Captains serve as training and fire prevention officers while a division chief, John Garriepy, serves as head of EMS. The department has a full-time mechanic and firefighters who serve on specialized teams, such as a state technical rescue team and state hazmat team. Some personnel also do fire investigation or SAFE training in schools.

Councilor Quinlan asked whether the department is up to speed with cancer resistant gear.

"We are," Assistant Chief Davine affirmed. Chief Nichols worked very hard with the union. Every firefighter has two sets of gear, so if they go to a fire tonight, they come back to the station, ditch the dirty gear and put on a clean uniform and the second set of gear while the dirty gear is being cleaned. They have two gear washing machines and two dryers, one downtown and one in Florence. They carry fire wipes in the trucks to enable firefighters to remove gross contamination.

Mrs. Wakins said she is very well-connected in Ward 2, and her neighbors consistently say that one of the prime reasons they love to live in Northampton is the fire service and EMS.

There being no further questions, Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the appointment of Assistant Chief Davine with a positive recommendation. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 (LaBarge absent).

Final action will be on the council's agenda Thursday night, Councilor Foster advised.

5. MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 3, 2020 ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Councilor Maiore moved to approve the minutes of February 3, 2020. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 by voice vote (LaBarge absent).

6. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

A. 20.022 Appointment to the Council on Aging - referred by City Council 2/6/2020 Council on Aging

Aurea "Agie" E. Domenech, 81 Conz St., Apt. 603, Northampton

Term: February 2020- June 2023

To fill a vacancy

Councilor Quinlan said he had a nice chat with Aurea "Agie" Domenech, who volunteers at the senior center now. She attended a Council on Aging meeting and felt that she could be a voice for the Latino community specifically in the senior center.

Councilor Foster asked if she had anything in particular she would like to see changed, and Councilor Quinlan said no, her idea is simply to bring a Latino voice to the council.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the appointment of Aurea Domenech to the Council on Aging with a positive recommendation. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion passed unanimously 3:0 by voice vote (LaBarge absent).

7. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Information Request for Demographic Breakdown of City Boards and Committees

Councilor Foster reiterated her request for a demographic breakdown of city boards and committees for the benefit of Councilor Maiore, who was not present at the last meeting. She explained that she had initiated the idea of tracking the age, gender and racial identity of people serving on boards and committees to get an idea of where they're at and whether boards and committees are reflecting the city they serve.

Councilor Maiore agreed it would be great to have a baseline. Councilor Foster expressed her willingness to email committee chairs to solicit the information.

Administrative Assistant Laura Krutzler shared that in her conversation with the Mayor in preparation for his attendance at today's meeting, he indicated that the Mayor's office would be agreeable to providing the information.

Councilor Foster asked if there was any other information members would want besides age, gender and ethnic/racial identity, such as socio-economic status. Councilor Maiore said she would be in favor of adding socio-economic status.

Mrs. Krutzler said she would share the discussion and communicate the interest in adding socio-economic status back to the Mayor's office.

B. Ideas for Departmental Presentation for April

Councilor Foster asked if there were any specific requests or ideas from members as to a topic they would like to learn more about from a department head for the April presentation. No one had a specific request but it was noted they would be free to propose a presentation if they think of something.

8. **Adjourn**

Councilor Quinlan moved to adjourn. Councilor Maiore seconded. The motion carried 3:0 by voice vote (LaBarge absent). The meeting was adjourned 5:10 p.m.

Prepared By:

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